

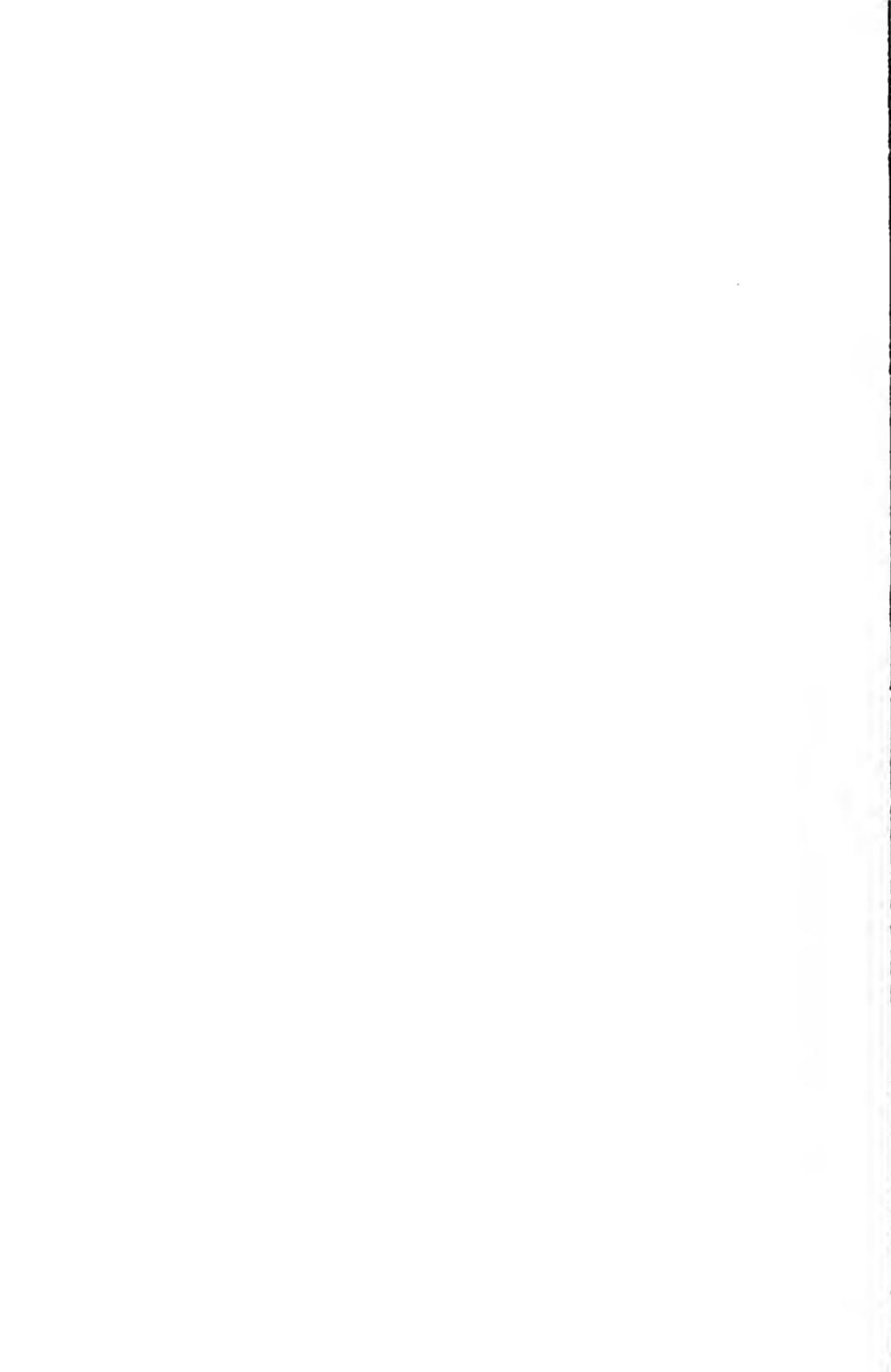
special
collections



DOUGLAS
LIBRARY

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
AT KINGSTON

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA



A
N A R R A T I V E

Of what passed in the

C O M M O N - H A L L

O F T H E

Citizens of London,

Assembled for the

Election of a Lord-Mayor,

On Saturday the 29th of September, on
Monday the 1st, and on Tuesday the 2d
of October.

Together with a

DEFENCE of these PROCEEDINGS,
both as reasonable and agreeable to the
Practice of former Times.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. COOPER, at the *Globe* in
Paper-nyster-Row. M D C. XXXIX,
(Price Six-pence.)

AC911.1739.R62



A

NARRATIVE, &c.

T will scarcely be denied, that the Conduct of the City of *London*, in all Exigencies of a publick Nature, will ever have a great Influence in regulating the Behaviour of the rest of the Kingdom, since the Decisions of a Body of Men, so eminent for their Wealth and their Numbers, and who, residing in that City, which is the Seat of Government, have the principal Scene of Affairs constantly in View, cannot but be received with some kind of Authority by those, who otherwise being at a Distance from the Source of Management, may be tempted to disregard the contradictory Assertions and Representations framed by the Champions of either Party.

B

There-

Therefore, that the Behaviour of the Citizens, in a late memorable Instance, may be fairly and impartially transmitted to the Publick, and that due Honour may be done to that laudable Decency and singular Resolution exerted on this Occasion, it has been thought proper to compose the present Narration, in which it is hoped, that all the interesting Circumstances of this important Event, are truly and dispassionately related ; and indeed it would be a matchless Degree of Impudence wilfully to misrepresent these Proceedings, which have been transacted in the Presence of so many Thousands.

The Election of a Lord Mayor of the City of *London*, is principally (tho' not solely) vested in the Liverymen of the said City ; for the Common-Hall, composed of the Liverymen, return two qualified Persons to the Court of Aldermen, one of which is by that Court nominated Mayor ; and tho' it is by some asserted, that it is not necessary that the Persons returned by the Common-Hall should be Aldermen, yet, such Confidence has the City usually reposed in its Magistrates, that the Livery have generally chosen the two Aldermen next the Chair, the eldest of which it has in like manner been customary for the Court of Aldermen to nominate to this high Office : And so few are the Exceptions to this Method of Rotation, that it is now thirty-eight Years since the Citizens have broken through it, from any Dislike to the

the Person next to this Promotion according to the usual Course.

But notwithstanding this long Acquiescence in the Method of raising each Alderman to the Chair according to his Seniority, the City, warm with Resentment at the publick Behaviour of that Gentleman, who this Year was next in Turn, resolved to reassume their ancient Right, and to testify to the Nation their utter Disapprobation of a late Measure, by the Disgrace they would thus fix on one, who had declared himself zealous in the Support of it ; and tho' the Post-Office, the Custom-House, the Excise-Office, together with the three great Companies, and all the other Allies of the Treasury, exerted themselves with incredible Activity in his Cause, yet so great was the Virtue and publick Spirit of the Electors, that the utmost Efforts of these united Bands served only to proclaim to the whole Nation how low their Reputation and their Interest is at present fallen.

On the 29th of *September*, the Day fixed for the Election, there was as great an Appearance of Liverymen at the *Guild-Hall* as has been remember'd on any past Occasion, it being supposed that more than three thousand were there at that time assembled. The Recorder (as usual) opened the Court with a Speech address'd to the Citizens, in which, after setting forth to them the Dignity and

Importance of the Office they were now going to bestow, and owning their undoubted Right to break through that regular Method of Promotion they had so many Years adhered to, he yet seemed to disapprove their Resolution to make use of it on this Occasion, telling them, that whatever Grievances they might conceive themselves burthen'd with, they had a Right to lay them before the Throne, and assuring them that the Ears of our most gracious Sovereign would be ever open to their just Apprehensions ; by this endeavouring, as it should seem, to recommend the petitioning his Majesty as a more regular and effectual Method of Redress, than the exerting their Zeal against a particular Person that had offended them. He also told them, that our Complaints would now in all Probability be soon removed, and that nothing could hinder the Success of the prudent Measures taken for that Purpose, but our own intestine Divisions. On the closing of this Period, the Hall gave very signal Marks of their general Disapprobation, and were seemingly highly irritated that their exerting a Right Mr. Recorder had confess'd to be vested in them, and which their well-grounded Exceptions to the publick Behaviour of the next Candidate did so justly authorize, should be thus stigmatiz'd as a Proceeding that might prejudice those Efforts we were now making for the Recovery of our national Honour. Mr. Recorder

order on this prudently discontinued that distasteful Subject, and changing the Purport of his Speech, he at last finished with his Wishes, that in the Affair then before them, their Behaviour might be such as most tended to the Honour and Welfare of the City. And for this Conclusion, he was justly saluted by the Acclamations of the Hall.

When the Lord-Mayor and the Court of Aldermen were withdrawn, the Common-Hall (as usual) was left in the Hands of the two worthy Sheriffs, Mr. Alderman *Heathcote*, and Sir *John Lequesne*, Knight. And after these Gentlemen had taken unusual Precaution that none might be present, but such as were really Liverymen, they proceeded to the Election; and on proposing to the Hall, Sir *George Champion*, Knight and Alderman, Sir *John Salter*, Knight and Alderman, and Sir *Robert Godschall*, Knight and Alderman, the three Gentlemen next below the Chair, it appeared that Sir *John Salter*, and Sir *Robert Godschall*, had a prodigious Majority of Hands, it being supposed by impartial Persons, well skilled in these Estimations, that Sir *George Champion* had not one fifth Part of the Number present; however, a Poll was demanded by the Friends of Sir *George Champion*, which was opened at Four that Afternoon, but was given up after it had continued about half an Hour. Those who reflected on the Demand of a Poll, after so incontestable

incontestable a Decision of the Common-Hall, and on the precipitate Manner of throwing it up afterwards, were induced to believe that the whole was conducted by Orders from a certain distant Quarter ; and that therefore in Consequence of a positive Command, previously issued from thence, it was necessary to insist on a Poll, till Leave could be procured from the same Place to give it over.

The Poll being thus declined by Sir *George Champion*, the Sheriffs adjourned the Hall till *Monday the 1st of October* ; when being again assembled, they declared the Numbers on the Poll to be as follows :

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| For Sir <i>John Salter</i> , | 95 |
| For Sir <i>Robert Godschall</i> , | 90 |
| For Sir <i>George Champion</i> , | 21 |

And then it was found necessary farther to adjourn to the next Day, no Court of Aldermen being at that time sitting, to whom the Report of the *Saturday's* Election could be made ; but before this Adjournment was declared to the Hall, Mr. *Glover* (one of the Liverymen present) arose, and addressing himself to the Sheriffs, he observed, that tho' the Citizens there assembled, influenced by the most just and laudable Motives, had set aside that Person, who, according to their usual Method of Election, had Reason to expect the Mayoralty of the City, for the Year ensuing ; yet, that their Proceedings might

might be altogether uniform, he thought it reasonable, that when they thus testified their Displeasure at the publick Behaviour of that Gentleman, they should, with the same Unanimity, pay their most grateful Acknowledgements to their four worthy Representatives, for their steady Adherence to the true Interests of their Country in every Instance, particularly for their Opposition to the late Convention with *Spain*: He also thought, that in the present Conjunction of Affairs, it might be expedient, that the Instructions of that Assembly should accompany their Thanks; and producing a Paper, which he said contained the Form of these Thanks and Instructions, he proposed it might be publickly read, and if (as he doubted not) it should be approved of by the Gentlemen there present, that the Sheriffs might be desired to present Copies of it to their Representatives, in the Name of the Common-Hall. He added, that as he had received that Paper from several Gentlemen of the highest Consideration in the City, it was at their earnest Request that he had undertaken to make this Motion.

This being seconded by *William Benn*, Esq; and approved of by the Hall, the Paper delivered by *Mr. Glover* was accordingly read, and received with the loudest Acclamations; the Form of it was as follows:

*To the Right Hon. Micajah Perry, Esq;
Lord-Mayor,*

*Humphry Parsons, Esq; Alderman,
Sir John Barnard, Knt. and Ald. and
Robert Willimot, Esq; Alderman,*

*Representatives of the City of London in this
present Parliament.*

WE the Liverymen of the City of *London*, in Common-Hall assembled, in order to exert our undoubted Right of Electing two proper Persons to be returned to the Court of Aldermen for the Year ensuing, should be wanting both to you and ourselves, if, whilst we are shewing our just Resentment by setting aside one Person, whose Conduct we disapprove, and whom we judge unworthy of that high and honourable Office, we did not take the same Opportunity of returning you our sincere and hearty Thanks for your general Conduct in Parliament; and in a more particular Manner for your late Endeavours to preserve us from the ruinous Consequences we then too justly apprehended from the Convention with *Spain*.

And, tho' neither your Endeavours at that Time, nor the Interposition of this City, had the desired Effect, yet every Man in this Nation must be now fully convinced of the Dishonour,

Dishonour, as well as Danger, of that fatal Treaty.

We are now made deeply sensible of the unhappy State of this Kingdom, from the imminent Mischiefs which seem to threaten us from Abroad ; and it is with great Grief we observe our excellent Constitution declining in some Instances at Home : But when the true Spirit and Vigour of a *British* Parliament shall exert itself, we promise ourselves, that, with the Divine Assistance, we shall be equally preserved from the Dangers of both.

In a free and uncorrupted Assembly of our Representatives consists not only the Dignity, but even the Character and Essence of a Parliament. It is of the highest Importance, that those, whom we intrust with an unrestrain'd Power of making all Laws, affecting our Trade, Properties and Lives, should be uninfluenced by any lucrative Considerations whatsoever ; and yet, notwithstanding several good Laws have been made to secure the Independency of the House of Commons, how insecure must that great Blessing be, from the Number of Placemen who have already got Footing there, and who may be augmented hereafter by many more !

It is therefore, as we apprehend, absolutely necessary, that some new and more effectual Provision should be made to reduce and limit their Number ; and we require and insist, that you would use your utmost En-

deavours to promote a Bill for that salutary Purpose, in Conjunction with such *Patriots* as may be willing to join with you, and assist you in this great and necessary Work.

As the Nation has on many Occasions found the happy Effects of applying to their respective Representatives, and giving them proper Instructions in Cases of great Consequence, as in particular with regard to the late pernicious Excise Scheme, which was calculated for the Destruction of the Liberties of this Nation, which vile Attempt was by these Means defeated, so we are unwilling to entertain the least Doubt of meeting with the same Success on this Occasion: And as this is a Point on which the very Being of Parliaments, and the Prosperity of this Kingdom so absolutely depend, we once more earnestly require you to make it a previous Step to the passing of any Money-Bill whatsoever.

When the Shouts that followed the reading of these Instructions were something subsided, Mr. Sheriff *Heathcote* addressed himself to the Liverymen, and reminded them, that the worthy Gentleman who had delivered the Paper, and had moved for its reading, had at the same time also moved, that if, when read, it was found agreeable to the Sentiments of the Assembly, their Sheriffs might be desired to present Copies of it to their Representatives; he therefore asked them if they adhered to that Motion, and to this the Af-
sent

sent of the Hall was declared by the heartiest and most strenuous Peals of Applause.

Silence being again proclaimed, Mr. Sheriff *Heathcote* a second Time addressed himself to the Citizens ; and, complimenting them upon their Conduct in this Election, he told them, that they had asserted their Rights, and vindicated the Honour of the City with Zeal, and had governed their Zeal with Temper ; that this their decent Behaviour had procured then the general Approbation of the Inhabitants of this great City, and would inforce the Authority of the Example set forth by this Proceeding to the whole Kingdom ; that the same Zeal, regulated by the same Temper, could not fail of adding a just Weight to every other Measure which they should hereafter think proper to take for the Preservation and Welfare of themselves and their Country. He then told them, that he must beg their Attention to an Affair, in his Opinion, of the greatest Consequence, not only to the good Government and Happiness of the City, but to the universal Liberty of the Kingdom ; that it was not unknown to them with how general a Consent the Common-Council had agreed to the late Petition against the Convention, two only of that Body dissenting ; that notwithstanding this almost unanimous Concurrence, there were those amongst the Aldermen who had presumed to move, that it might be crush'd by the Negative, vested in their Court ; that this Attempt, to deprive

the Citizens of the most valuable of their Rights, that of addressing themselves to the Legislature, or the Throne, had so filled him with Apprehensions of the fatal Use that might one Day be made of that Power, that he had then resolved to lay hold of the first Opportunity to endeavour at the repealing of that Clause, by which the Concurrence of the Majority of the Aldermen present in Common-Council, is necessary to the Acts of that Body ; that he thought no Season properer than the present for this Purpose ; that if the Citizens entertain'd the same Dread of the pernicious Consequences that might be apprehended in future Times, from the Exertion of this Power of the Negative, that he himself did, it were a Proceeding well suited to the generous Zeal for Liberty they had now shewn to request their Members heartily to attempt the repealing it ; that he did not intend to move now for such an Instruction, but held it decent to postpone it till the next Day, when the Gentlemen in whom the Negative was lodged would be present, and who, if they differed in Opinion from him as to the Expediency of taking it away, might publickly urge their Reasons : that in the mean time, he referred it to the Consideration of the worthy Liverymen then present ; adding, that, as an Alderman, he was now endeavouring to abridge his own Power ; but that the Dangers which the future Abuse of this Power might subject us to, appeared

peared to him so terrible, that he should deserve to be consider'd as the meanest of Mankind, if he could but, for a Moment, put any Privileges of his own in Competition with what he believed to be of such immediate Consequence to the publick Liberty. He concluded with addressing himself to Heaven for Protection in this critical and important Juncture ; praying that the great God, who had so often and so miraculously deliver'd us, would support, under the Illustrious House of *Hanover*, the Prosperity of this vast Metropoliis ; that he would preserve the Laws, the Liberties, the Reputation, and the Commerce of his Majesty's *British* Dominions, till the general final Dissolution of the World. The reiterated Volleys of Approbation that attended this Speech being ceased, and the Thanks of the Citizens returned to their two worthy Sheriffs for their candid and impartial Behaviour, as they had been before to Mr. *Glover* for his Motion, the Court was adjourned till the next Morning.

The Hall being assembled on *Tuesday* the second of *October*, and nearly as much crowded as it was the preceding *Saturday*, the Lord-Mayor and Court of Aldermen having taken their Seats, it was declared, that Sir *John Salter*, Knight and Alderman, was duly elected Lord-Mayor for the Year ensuing. The Declaration and the customary Speech being ended, a Gentleman of the Livery moved, that the following Question, which he read

in his Place, might be proposed to the Hall.

Do you consent earnestly to intreat the Lord-Mayor to call a Common-Council with all convenient Speed, in order to consider of a most dutiful and loyal Address to His Majesty on the present State of the Kingdom.

This Question being seconded by another Liveryman, and seemingly desired by the Hall, the Lord-Mayor, after a short Contest with the Gentleman that proposed it, declined to put it in Form ; but at the same time promised, that he would call a Common-Council for the Purpose therein mention'd.

This Affair thus ended, Mr. Sheriff *Heathcote* addressed himself to the Lord-Mayor, who, not attending to him, order'd the Court to be adjourn'd, and rose himself from his Chair. But so desirous was the Assembly to hear what the Sheriff had to say, and so loud their Disapprobation of the Adjournment, that the Lord-Mayor, in Compliance with their general Request, again seated himself, and the Sheriff proceeded ; and after he had repeated the Reasons that had induced him to disapprove of the Negative, and the Mischief that the Continuation of it might one Day expose us to, he added, that though possibly, in the short Interval in which this Power had been settled, no Instance could be produced of the Abuse of it, yet he thought an Attempt to abuse it was a sufficient Warrant

rant for endeavouring its Repeal ; that if we continued it till it was abused, it was possible the first Abuse might be such as would prevent all future Efforts for Redress ; that the neglecting to secure ourselves against its ill Effects till we had felt them, was exposing us to the vulgar Censure of that trite Proverb, *Shutting the Stable-door when the Steed was stolen* ; that if the Citizens, moved by these Reasons, did think it adviseable to attempt the disannulling of this Power granted to the Aldermen, the only possible Method of promoting this good Work must be by the Instructions of the Common Hall to their Representatives for that Purpose ; since were such Instructions moved in Common-Council, besides the Exception of Self-Interest, which would doubtless be urged against that Body, they would be told, that as they were not the Electors of our Representatives, they had no Right to direct them ; and after all, the Aldermen would no doubt quash, with their negative Voice, all Proceedings intended to abridge their Power ; and should the Representatives themselves, on their own Judgments, attempt this Task, such an Attempt in them would be censur'd as arising from a Passion for popular Applause. Since then the most effectual, nay, the only practicable Method of proceeding on this Subject was, by taking the Opinion of the Common-Hall there assembled, he had drawn up the following Question for that Purpose, which he first

first read himself, and then humbly intreated the Lord-Mayor to propose to the Assembly, by the proper Officer.

The Question he read was as follows :

WHereas by a Clause in an *Act* of the eleventh Year of King *George I.* for regulating Elections within the City of *London, &c.* it is enacted, *That no Act, Order, or Ordinance whatsoever, shall be made or passed in the Common-Council of the said City, without the Assent of the Mayor and Aldermen present at such Common-Council, or the major Part of them* : Do you good Men of the Livery now present require and instruct the Right Honourable *Micajah Perry, Esq; Lord-Mayor, Humphry Parsons, Esq; Alderman, Sir John Barnard, Knt. and Alderman, and Robert Willimot, Esq; Alberman*, your four worthy Representatives, to use their most strenuous Endeavours for repealing the said Clause ?

Mr. Sheriff having read his Question (which was received with general Applause) and renewed his Intreaty to the Lord-Mayor, that it might be proposed to the Hall by the proper Officer, a Debate arose between these Gentlemen, the Lord-Mayor complaining that he had not been previously acquainted with this Motion ; that the neglecting to do this, was a Want of Respect to the Office he held ; that the putting such a Question to the Common-

Common-Hall, appeared to him without Precedent, and therefore he could not comply with it. However, Mr. Sheriff insisting on his Question, there ensued a Silence, which, excepting the Interruption it frequently received from the general Cry of the Hall for the Question, continued near half an Hour. At length the Lord-Mayor, addressing himself to the Livery, told them, that his Refusal to put the Question arose not from any Dislike to it, but only from an Apprehension that such a Proceeding would be irregular and unprecedented; that though the Question had not been formally proposed, he was yet satisfied, from the Behaviour of the Assembly, that they did generally approve of it; and therefore he should believe himself to be fully instructed to endeavour the Repeal of the Negative, and doubted not but their three other worthy Representatives would in like manner acquiesce in the apparent Disposition of the Hall, without the Ceremony of a Question. Then, turning to Mr. Sheriff *Heathcote*, he repeated his Complaints of the Disrespect that had been shewn him, by thus bringing Questions before that Assembly, without previously acquainting him, the chief Magistrate, therewith; adding, that he could not help believing that it had been done with a premeditated View to injure his Character with the Publick, by thus embarrassing him with Points of a popular Nature, without giving

him Time to reflect on their Tendency and Importance.

To this Mr. Sheriff replied, that he was extremely sorry his Lordship should suspect him of a Conduct so different from his real Intentions, and that sincere Regard he had ever profess'd for his Lordship's Virtues: That he had long attended to his Lordship's Behaviour in that House, in which they had many Years sat together; and that he could do no less than testify, that, in his Opinion, none exceeded his Lordship in their Attachment to the true Honour and Welfare of their Country, and that none pursued its Interests with more Zeal and Application; and that he was so well convinced of his Lordship's Steadiness in the Prosecution of the publick Cause, that it would be a great Grief to him to find, that his Merit should in any future Time suffer in the publick Opinion, since as such a Change could only be effected by Falshoods and Misrepresentations, it would necessarily prove mischievous to those who should be thus deceived; that this being his unfeigned Opinion of his Lordship's Worth, he begg'd him to believe, that his neglecting to concert his Motion with him before-hand arose not from any Motives that were personal to his Lordship; that possibly he might have been to blame in not doing it, but if it were an Error, it was an Error of Judgment only, and proceeded

ceeded not from any Disrespect to his Lordship: That he was grieved not only to be suspected of so base an Intention, but also that he should be supposed to be influenced in his Endeavours to procure so great a Good by so mean and disingenuous a Motive. That since his Lordship had acknowledged the Opinion of the Hall to be in Support of the Question, this Affair might well be rested on that Concession, and it seemed no longer necessary to insist on a more formal Decision; and therefore he should be satisfied with what had been done with regard to his Motion: But that he might not be thought to have exerted himself on this Occasion with more Eagerness than the Importance of the Subject required, he must beg Leave, in Defence of his own Character, more particularly to point out the extreme Mischiefs to which the Power of the Negative might one Day expose not only the City, but the Nation: That it was well known that the most effectual Method which the Publick could at any time take to defeat those pernicious Schemes which designing Men are sometimes forming against the Liberty of this Country, was by addressing themselves to the Legislature, or to the Throne; that we were all convinced of the salutary Effects of such a Proceeding in the Case of the late projected Excise, which was by this means principally prevented: But that how sensible soever the rest of the Nation might at any

time be of the mischievous Tendency of any publi k Measure, it was customary for them to wait the Motions of the City, it being presumed, that the Inhabitants of the Metropolis, being present on the Scene of Action, would more accurately judge of the Conjecture the most proper for their Application, than thole, who, by reason of their Distance, were liable to be deceived by imperfect Informations : That therefore, if in any future Times a corrupt and wicked Minister should arise, who should project the Destruction of our Liberties, he need only to secure to his Interest a Majority of the Court of Aldermen, and he would in a great measure baffle all that Opposition which has hitherto so much embarras'd these iniquitous Attempts ; for he would by this means effectually prevent all Petitions and Addresses from the City of *London* in their Corporate Capacity ; and in the mean time the rest of the Nation, waiting for their usual Signal, would be naturally persuaded, that as the City interposed not, their Alarms and Apprehensions were in a great measure groundless ; and thus, by the Exertion of the Negative Power in the Court of Aldermen, the Nation might be irrevocably enslav'd, and the most abject Misery entail'd on us and all our Posterity. Upon the closing of this Speech, which was acquiesced in by the Citizens present with the heartiest and loudest Applauses, the Lord-Mayor dismiss'd the Hall.

Thus

Thus have I given an Account (an impartial one I presume) of the Transactions of the Common-Hall on these three memorable Days ; but as there are different Opinions about the Regularity of some of these Proceedings, I thought it might not be unacceptable to the Reader more fully to discuss the Objections that have been made to the proposing other Matters than Elections to the Determination of the Common-Hall ; and I hope to make appear in the Course of this Dissertation, that nothing has been now done but what is legal, and warranted by the most indisputable Precedents.

That there are many Matters, which it would be extremely irregular to propose to the Discussion of the Common-Hall, will be readily granted ; but in order to defend the Behaviour of the Liverymen at this Juncture, it is sufficient to prove, that neither their agreeing to a Petition, or delivering Instructions to their Representatives (which is all that they have lately done) can at all incur the most distant Charge of Irregularity.

The Right of an *Englishman* to petition his Majesty (and consequently any inferior Magistrate) and of an Elector to instruct his Representative, are the most valuable and interesting of any we possess ; they have often saved us, when almost every other Right has been devour'd by arbitrary Power, and have been so esteemed by the Legislature, and confirmed to us in such different Methods,

thods, and at such various Periods, that few of our other Privileges can boast such incontestable Sanctions. These Rights then being vested in every Person composing the Common-Hall, which any one in particular, or any Number of them, may exert at any Time or Place they please, provided they create neither Riot nor Tumult; surely there cannot adhere to the Fabrick of *Guild-Hall* such a despotic Charm, as should brand with the Censure of Irregularity these Proceedings, which as they were not enter'd on till the proper Busines of the Hall was ended, would in every other Place be confess'd to be most scrupulously regular and legal. When I reflect that those, who are loudest in charging these A&ts of the Common-Hall with Irregularity, must yet confess, that every Liveryman present did only exert an undoubted Right vested in him by the Laws, I must own I know not to what Circumstance of Time, Place or Person, the Irregularity can be imputed, since the proper Busines of the Day was previously finished, and the whole was conducted with such unexceptionable Decency.

And this Charge particularly against the Common Hall, of having exceeded its Power in the Instances now before us, will appear still more groundless, when we consider with how much greater Propriety the Right of instructing the Representatives can be made use of there than in any other City-Assembly.

For

For the Common-Hall consists of the Body of Electors who make the Representatives ; whereas the other City-Assembly, the Common-Council, are neither chosen by the Livery, nor are obliged to be Liverymen themselves ; and therefore they could not with Decency intermeddle in an Affair of this Nature. If then the Common-Hall has no Right to deliver Instructions to its Representatives, no other City-Assembly can pretend to it. And thus this illustrious Metropolis would be degraded from that common Privilege enjoyed by so many Thousands of the meanest of his Majesty's Subjects, and which has been so frequently asserted by the most inconsiderable Corporations in the Kingdom.

But whilst our present happy Constitution remains, and we are intrusted with the important Charge of electing a Part of the Legislature, it shall not be in the Power of the deluded, the prejudiced, or the venal, to stigmatise, as contrary to our Duty to our King, our Country, our Laws, Magistrates or Fellow-Citizens, those Declarations we shall make to our Representatives, about the Measures we esteem necessary for the future Security of our inestimable Liberty, whether these Declarations are made separately or jointly, privately or publickly, in Assemblies purposely convened, or in others, where the Fitnes of such a Procedure may accidentally intervene. For the generous Efforts of a

Free

Free People, endeavouring, by every honest Art, to secure to their Posterity the glorious Possession bequeathed to them by their Ancestors, shall be regarded in all future Times with Veneration; whilst the angry, impotent Censures of the credulous and corrupted shall be buried in Oblivion, or shall be remember'd only to perpetuate the Contempt and Execration of their Authors.

As then the Proceedings of the Common Hall appear to have been highly reasonable, and in the strictest Sense regular, we might well be spared the Labour of proving them agreeable to our former Customs, since it should seem that they are sufficiently warranted by their Propriety. But as amongst the various Characters of which Mankind consist, there are Numbers that think nothing expedient (however unexceptionable and necessary it may otherwise appear) unless it can be proved to have been practised before; for the sake of these Gentlemen, we will amply convict, of Rashness and Falshood, that vulgar Assertion of late so confidently promulg'd " that the proposing to the Common-Hall other Matters than those of the Election for which they are convened, is altogether without Precedent."

* And here, not to burthen the Reader with a long Catalogue of the Subjects different

* That the Reader might not have the Trouble of turning to the various Originals in which these Transactions

rent from Elections, which in the last hundred Years have been discussed in the Common-Hall, such as controverted Rights,^a the Power of the Privy-Council in the Affairs of the City,^b Answers made by the King to City-Petitions,^c Letters written by the King expressly to the Common-Hall,^d Limits of Jurisdiction of the City Magistrates,^e on which Head even Council have been there produced. Not to insist on these and many more miscellaneous Acts of the Common-Hall which our Histories furnish us with, we will confine ourselves principally to Precedents that are similar to our late Proceedings.

In the State Tracts published (as is asserted in the Title-page) to shew the Necessity, and clear the Legality of the late Revolution, there occurs (p. 131, 132.) the following Narration:

“ **O**N the fourth of *February* 1680-1,
 “ **O**n the City of *London* assembled in
 “ Common-Hall, consisting of several thou-
 “ sand Liverymen, having, by an unanimous
 “ Voice, elected their old Representatives,
 “ returned them their Thanks in a Paper
 “ there publickly read and approv'd of with
 “ a general Consent.”

actions occur, we have here inserted such only as are to be found in *Maitland's History of London*; a Book in almost every one's Hand; and the following Numbers do accordingly refer to the Pages of that Author.

^a 219, ^b 303, ^c 252, ^d 244 ^e 303.

To the Honour'd Sir Robert Clayton, Knt.

Thomas Pilkington, Alderman, Sir Thomas Player, Knt. and William Love, Esq; late (and now chosen) Members of Parliament for this honourable City of London.

“ *WE* the Citizens of this City in Common
 “ *Wth* Hall assembled, having experienced
 “ the great and manifold Services of you our
 “ Representatives in the two last Parliaments,
 “ by your faithful and unwearied Endeavours
 “ to search into and discover the Depth of
 “ the horrid and hellish Popish Plots; to
 “ preserve his Majesty's royal Person, the
 “ Protestant Religion, and the well-establisht'd
 “ Government of this Realm; to secure the
 “ Meeting and Sitting of frequent Parlia-
 “ ments; to assert our undoubted Rights of
 “ Petitioning, and to punish such who would
 “ have betrayed those Rights; to promote
 “ the happy and long-wish'd for Union
 “ amongst all his Majesty's Protestant Sub-
 “ jects; to repeal the 35th of *Elizabeth*,
 “ and the Corporation-A^t; and especially
 “ for what Progress hath been made towards
 “ the Exclusion of all Popish Successors, and
 “ particularly *James Duke of York*, whom
 “ the Commons of *England*, in the two last
 “ Parliaments, have declared, and we are
 “ greatly sensible is the principal Cause of
 “ all the Ruin and Misery impending on these
 “ Kingdoms in general, and this City in
 “ particular. For all which, and other your
 “ con-

“ constant and faithful Management of
 “ our Affairs in Parliament, we offer and
 “ return to you our most hearty Thanks, be-
 “ ing confidently assured, that you will not
 “ consent to the granting any Money-Supply
 “ untill you have effectually secur'd us against
 “ Popery and Arbitrary Power ; resolving,
 “ (by Divine Assistance) in Pursuance of the
 “ same Ends, to stand by you with our Lives
 “ and Fortunes.”

“ And likewise there was offered another
 “ Paper directed to the Sheriffs, purporting
 “ their Thanks to the several noble Peers for
 “ their late Petition and Advice to his Ma-
 “ jesty, which was as follows.”

*To the Worshipful Slingsby Bethel, and Henry
 Cornish, Esqrs; Sheriffs of the City of
 London and Westminster.*

“ **W**E the Citizens of the said City in
 “ Common-Hall assembled, having
 “ read and diligently perused the late Petition
 “ and Advice of several noble Peers of this
 “ Realm to his Majesty, whose Counsels we
 “ humbly conceive are (in this unhappy
 “ Juncture) highly seasonable and greatly
 “ tending to the Safety of these Kingdoms ;
 “ we do therefore make it our earnest Re-
 “ quest, that you (in the Name of this Com-
 “ mon-Hall, will return to the Right Honour-
 “ able the Earl of *Essex*, and (by him) to

E 2 “ the

“ the rest of those noble Peers the grateful
“ Acknowledgment of this Assembly.”

“ Which being read and approved of by
“ a general Acclamation, the Sheriffs
“ promised to give their Lordships the Thanks
“ of the Common-Hall, in Pursuance of their
“ Request.”

Let now those who are loudest in condemning our late Proceedings stand forth ; and that their Censures may be consistent, let them declare the Behaviour of the Common-Hall, in the Instance here quoted, to have been rash and irregular : And when they shall have thus branded the Efforts of their Fore fathers to secure their Religion and Laws from the impious Attempts of an abhorred Ministry, into whose Hands the then indolent Prince had as it were resigned his Power, we shall then be enabled more accurately to determine what Authority is due to such prostituted Judgments. In the mean time, not to fatigue the Reader with a tedious Recital of all the other Precedents of this kind that are to be met with in our Histories, we will only produce one more, which is indeed a decisive one, and in which it will appear, that the Common-Hall have not always confined themselves to the instructing their own Representatives, or addressing their own Magistrates, but that they have sometimes interceded with the Legislature for the procuring of new Laws of the most extensive and interesting Nature.

The

The Fact, I shall here refer to, occurs in the Journal of the House of Commons, in the Year 1689, and is in short as follows:

The Citizens of *London*, in Common-Hall assembled, for the Election of Sheriffs, did, at the same time, agree to a Petition to the House of Commons, and ordered their Sheriffs and the common Serjeant to present it.

This Petition set forth in Substance, "That the Body Representative of the City of *London*, in the Common-Hall assembled," could not but, with all Thankfulness, acknowledge the infinite Mercies of Almighty God, the heroic Courage and excellent Conduct of his then Majesty, and the Wisdom and Counsel of their Honours, whereby the Rights and Liberties of the Petitioners, and the very being of Justice and Peace had been so wonderfully preserved; but they expressed their Apprehensions of the Dangers impending over the *English* Church and State, from the Endeavours of the Papists to animate the various Denominations of Protestants against each other, thereby making them to promote their own Destruction. They then pray'd that the ancient Privilege of the City to chuse its Magistrates might be secured from all future Doubts, and that for this Purpose, the Bill for restoring Corporations to their Rights might be perfected; and as the Conspiracies of the Papists, and the threatened Invasion from *France*, did render the united Force of

all

all the Protestants apparently necessary, they did therefore farther pray, " That our most " gracious King may be freed from the Re- " straints of using his Protestant Subjects in- " differently in his military or civil Services, " according to their several Qualities and " Abilities, wherewith God Almighty, Na- " ture, Education, and Experience, had en- " dowed them."

This Petition, pursuant to the Order of the Common-Hall, was, next Day *June 25*, presented to the House by the two Sheriffs, and the common Serjeant; but as it was not signed by any Person, it was returned to them again, upon which they withdrew and signed it themselves in the following Manner:

WE the Sheriffs of the City of *London*, and County of *Middlesex*, with the common Serjeant, were Yesterday ordered by the Citizens of *London*, in Common-Hall assembled, to present to the honourable House of Commons this Petition, *June 25, 1689.*

Humphry Edwin.
Henry Crispe.
John Fleet.

The Petition thus signed being re-delivered at the Bar of the House, by Mr. common Serjeant, a Debate arose whether the Petition should be read as thus signed; and the Question being put, it passed in the Affirmative, Yea's 174, No's 147.

And

And from hence it appears, not only that the Common-Hall, when assembled for the Election of Magistrates, have done other Acts no ways connected with that Election (contrary to what has lately been so confidently asserted;) but also, that in the Opinion of the House of Commons, they have a Right so to do. It also follows from hence, that the Common-Hall, like a Corporation, has a Right of Petitioning, and ordering that Petition to be delivered by proper Officers, on whose Attestation only, without being signed by Particulars, the Petition is to be considered as the Act of the whole Body.

And this Decision of the House of Commons will receive an additional Sanction, when it is remember'd, that it was this House of Commons, that after censuring the arbitrary Proceedings of the past Reigns, and asserting our ancient Rights, did so chearfully concur in presenting the imperial Crown of these Kingdoms to the Prince and Princess of *Orange*, and who afterwards (swayed in some measure, doubtless by this Petition of this powerful City) did agree to an Act for the Toleration of Protestants, an Act which has since so signally contributed to the Wealth, Peace and Happiness, of the Inhabitants of this Nation.

Ill does it become those, who are ever professing their Veneration for the Revolution, and who are so immediately interested in the

Act

Act of Toleration, that their Enemies have accused them of sacrificing to it the dearest Rights of their Fellow-Subjects ; Ill does it become any of these Gentlemen to accuse, as unwarranted and illegal, the late Acts of the Common-Hall, which were so far short of that which, in Imitation of this glorious Pattern, they had a Right to do on this Occasion.

Before I entirely dismiss this Subject, I must beg Leave to make a few Observations on the Apprehensions many pretended to entertain, that the late Election would have disturbed the Peace of the City ; for tho' Experience has shewn these Fears to be groundless, yet it may not be altogether useless, with regard to our future Conduct, to be satisfied of the Vanity of such imaginary Terrors.

And in the first place, I suppose it will be granted me, that the Frights of the most Pusillanimous extended not farther than the Expectation of inflammatory Speeches, angry Debates, and passionate Reproaches ; for to believe that at this Time of Day real and effective Violence could take Place, would betray an extreme Ignorance of the present State of the City, and an ill-merited Diffidence in our present worthy Magistrates.

Those, who censure the Animosity that frequently attends Elections as disorderly and mischievous, ought at the same time to censure our Constitution, that has wisely lodg'd the Right of Election in such numerous Hands ;

Hands ; since if these Censors think it reasonable to elect a Person, who is otherwise disapproved of, in order to prevent these Contests, they do by that confess, that in their Opinion the Preservation of this languid, stupid State of Things, which they are pleased to stile Peace, is of more Importance than the Rights of Election vested in the Hands of the People.

But I shall endeavour to shew, that however displeasing and inconvenient these Contests may sometimes prove, they are in general so far from being hurtful to the Publick, that they are on the contrary of the most salutary Influence, and that the Benefits arising from them are not the least of the many we derive from our envied Freedom.

For in honest Men these Disputes, tho' begun with Party Heat, do yet by degrees tend to rectify their Judgments, fashion their Opinions, and purge their Minds of Prejudices ; so that if Interest intervene not, their partial Estimation of publick Merit is at last eradicated, and a more cheering Standard is established in its room ; the Maxims which from their Childhood hav passed with them for incontestable, they now discover to be ridiculously fallacious, and from hence they are taught Moderation in their Censures. Thus Reason daily triumphs on the Ruins of Authority, and what was originally a blind and bigotted Passion for the Interest of a Party, is by Length of Time meliorated

into a steady well-directed Zeal for the publick Happiness.

And this Discussion of Opinions, originally produced by our political Debates; having extended itself to other Inquiries, the present Inhabitants of this Island have by this means acquired a Capacity for the Management of speculative Subjects, superior to what has been at any time possess'd by any other People.

I shall conclude with observing, that we cannot be too suspicious of those, who have no better Reasons to assign for their Behaviour, than the Preservation of the Peace, in Instances too, where none but themselves can perceive the least Probability of its being broken: It generally means no more than the Preservation of ill-gotten Power or Authority from the troublesome Rebukes of saucy Reason. In *Spain* and *Portugal*, we all know, that Numbers of Hereticks are daily condemned to the Flaimes, to preserve the Peace of the Church; and in despotic Governments, if a Wretch, unmade mad by Oppression, dares but to mutter his Complaints against the Tyranny he groans under, he is immediately butcher'd to preserve the Peace of the Country.



